

Quiet man gets to star

There are a lot of things people expect when they envision a pro wrestling headliner. There's the bulging muscles, the dark tan, the gift of gab and the outgoing and outrageous personality.

Bobby Eaton is none of those. But among those in the profession, he's been considered one of the top 10 wrestlers in the world for the past eight years.

He's become something of a cult favorite among some fans of World Championship Wrestling as the normal, quiet guy who brings his lunch in a lunch box to work and then does the best job around, often to little fanfare.

But Eaton, 32, finds himself in a strange position Wednesday night. He's a headliner, challenging Ric Flair for the WCW world title on the TBS "Clash of Champions" TV special from Knoxville, Tenn. The match most likely will be a throwback to 1970s wrestling. It'll be wrestled two out of three falls. And it will probably be a long and physically grueling battle.

Eaton's road to his biggest match didn't start far from Knoxville. He started wrestling as a teenager out of Huntsville, Ala. He originally drove the wrestling ring from town-to-town and helped set up the ring for local promoter Nick Gulas. Gulas finally let him wrestle when he turned 17.

His biggest career break came in 1983 when the Midnight Express tag team was formed. First with Dennis Condrey, and later with Stan Lane as Eaton's partner, managed by super-mouth Jim Cornette, Eaton picked up three tag-team-of-the-year awards (1986-88). He also was named the most underrated wrestler three times (1985, 1986, and 1990).

But after a dispute with management, Cornette and Lane quit WCW. Eaton stayed on, and was given a two-year \$170,000-per-year contract for his loyalty. But most expected that without someone to do his interviews, that he'd get lost in the shuffle. And in truth, he somewhat has. But for one night on a national TV special, Eaton will bring his lunch box to Knoxville, and go to the ring as the headliner on one of the year's big shows.



**NO
HOLDS
BARRED**

BY DAVE MELTZER
FOR THE NATIONAL

FC: Several pro wrestlers, including "Rowdy" Roddy Piper (WWF), Danny Spivey (WCW), Brian Blair (Universal Wrestling Federation) and Rick Martel (currently on hiatus from the WWF) have been subpoenaed to testify in the trial of Dr. George Zaharian in Harrisburg, Pa., according to Long Island's Pro Wrestling Spotlight radio show. Zaharian, whose trial begins June 24, is accused of selling steroids to wrestlers. Within the profession, this has become the leading story because with career advancement dependent largely on physique, it creates an environment in which steroid abuse is way out of control. Former wrestler "Superstar" Billy Graham, now crippled from joint degeneration attributed to his years of steroid use, has also been subpoenaed. . . . Eaton lost his WCW television title to Steve Austin on June 3 in Birmingham, Ala. Vivacious Veronica (Robin Smith) has been replaced as Austin's valet by Lady Blossom (Jeannie Clark).

Chad
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